

REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's thorough review of the present application, and respectfully request reconsideration in light of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 6-23 are pending in the application. Claims 1-5 have been cancelled and replaced with new claims 6-10 to overcome numerous indefiniteness and art rejections manifested in the Office Action. New claims 11-23 have further been added to provide Applicants with the scope of protection to which they are believed entitled. New claims 6-23 find solid support in the originally filed specification and drawings, especially the first paragraph on page 8 and Figs. 4-6. No new matter has been introduced through the new claims.

The objections to the title, specification, drawings and abstract, as well as the indefiniteness and art rejections of the original claims, are moot in view of the above amendments.

New independent claim 6 includes original claims 1 and 4 and is considered patentable over the applied Mizutani patent (U.S. Patent No. 5,795,345).

New claim 6 is directed to an absorbent article comprising a liquid-permeable topsheet and a liquid-absorbent core having an upper surface covered by the topsheet and a lower surface. Further, the core has indented regions arranged along two lines extending longitudinally along transversely opposite sides of the core so that the lines are spaced apart from each other by a distance gradually increasing from a minimum at a longitudinally middle point thereof to a maximum at longitudinally opposite ends thereof. In the article of the present invention, the indented regions longitudinally divide the core into a central region confined between the indented regions, and two side regions each located between one of the indented regions and the respective one of the transversely opposite sides of the core. New claim 6 further requires that the core

contain a fibrous component and a density of the fibrous component in the indented regions is **equal to or lower than** in the central and side regions, or, in other words, the remaining region of the core.

Mizutani teaches the opposite. In column 2, lines 49-56, Mizutani states that the portions of the core 4 extending along and adjacent to respective inner and outer side walls $5D_1$, $5D_2$ defining the groove 5 (Fig. 3 of Mizutani) have a density lower than the densities of the compressed zones 8, 9 beneath the groove 5, but higher than the density of the remainder region of the core 4. This means, the material density in the compressed zones 8, 9 beneath the groove 5 is **higher than** in the remaining region of the core.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that new independent claim 6 is patentable over the applied art of record. Claims 7-23 depend from new claim 6, and are considered patentable at least for the reason advanced with respect to new claim 6. Claims 7-23 are also patentable on their own merit since these claims recite other features of the invention neither disclosed, taught nor suggested by the applied art.

As to new claim 10 and original claim 5, the Examiner's contention that it would have been a matter of obvious design choice to limit the super-absorptive polymer in the central region of the core is traversed since the claimed arrangement advantageously avoids formation of gel blocks in the region of the grooves 18, as discussed in page 9, lines 9-17 of the present specification.

Each of the Examiner's rejections has been overcome. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that all claims are now in condition for allowance. Early and favorable indication of allowance is courteously solicited.

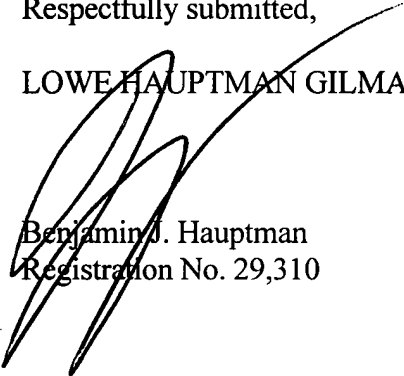
The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned, Applicant's attorney of record, to facilitate advancement of the present application.

Serial No. 09/458/077

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 07-1337 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: August 29, 2001
BJH/lcw

Serial No. 09/458/077

MARKED-UP VERSION SHOWING CHANGES MADE

IN THE TITLE:

Please change the title to:

--DISPOSABLE BODY FLUID[S] ABSORBENT ARTICLE HAVING
LONGITUDINAL SIDE GROOVE--.

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please replace the originally filed Specification with the attached Specification.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please delete claims 1-5 without prejudice.

Claims 6-23 are new.